

Bohemia Walled Garden Association
Trustee Annual Report
For the year January - December 2021
Charity Commission report & for AGM in 2022

The Bohemia Walled Garden Association (BWGA)

The BWGA was formed in 2009 with the purpose of restoring, preserving and utilising the 19th Century Victorian walled garden in the Summerfields Wood. It aims to bring it back into active use for horticultural, educational, heritage and cultural activities.

The garden is owned by Hastings Borough Council (HBC) and leased to the BWGA for 25 years until 31 March 2036. The lease was renewed on the 5th January 2018 in line with the BWGA change of status to a Registered Charity. The garden is located in the Summerfields Wood which is a Local Nature Reserve (LNR).

Structure, Governance and Management

The BWGA is managed by volunteers. It is a registered Charity (Registration Number 1167167) as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) with voting members other than its charity trustees. The organisation is managed by charity trustees and governed by the BWGA Charity Commission Constitution. It follows Charity Commission (CC) guidelines and must report annually to the CC to affirm its obligation to function for the 'public benefit' and to uphold the BWGA/CC objectives.

The BWGA trustees are supported by other BWGA members on a committee who have delegated roles. BWGA members, plot-holders and volunteers are overseen by the trustees in the everyday running of the garden, events, fundraising and educational activities. The local community is encouraged to participate in all the above.

The BWGA Charity Commission Objects:

- (1) To promote for the public the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment.
- (2) To advance the education of the public in the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment.
- (3) The provision of facilities for recreation and other leisure-time occupation in the interests of social welfare for the public at large with the object of improving their conditions of life.

To be a Charity it is necessary for the trustees to understand and to have regard to the 'public benefits' that the charity aims to provide as in the objectives. The Trustees Annual Report is to show how these objectives are being achieved. It is presented to the BWGA members at the AGM.

Members of the BWGA committee as confirmed at the 2021 AGM

Trustee(Chair)	Nigel Sinden
Trustee(Secretary - shared)	Justine Munro
Trustee(Secretary - shared)	Daniela Othieno
Trustee(Treasurer & Plot Secretary)	Sue Jirbandey

The current trustees are supported by other members in various activities.

Fund Raising and Income

Income in 2021 has come from the plot fees and refreshments sales and donations at public events.

Expenditure

The following sizeable expenditures were made in 2021:

- Annual insurance, which covers public liability and protects the individual trustees.
- Toilet maintenance: The wind powered toilet was not functioning as expected and needed to be emptied by a professional company.

Any expenses incurred by our volunteers are reimbursed, following a procedure of proof of expense and payment is always authorised by two trustees.

Grant applications

One application for funding for the planned sun and rain shelter was made to the Ansvar Community Campaign in June 2021, but was unsuccessful

Financial Management

The BWGA operates a bank account which is mainly managed online and can make and receive payments by BACS. Plot fees can be made by BACS and we make payments by BACS for members expenses and other expenditures (like insurance, membership fees). The financial controls online are the same as physical cheque payments that need two authorisations.

Our accounts for 2021 have not been examined externally as they were under £10,000, for which external review is not required. The accounts are prepared by the treasurer and are presented at the AGM and submitted to the Charity Commission.

Insurance, Health and Safety and Policies

The BWGA has public liability insurance and this is renewed annually. The BWGA does risk assessments for all events and activities at the garden. The risk assessment is based on a template policy before being customised for each event. Various policy documents (including risk management, volunteering and privacy) are available on our web site.

Publicity, Information, Members and Supporters

Our main social media platform currently is Facebook. The garden has its own website (www.bohemiawga.org.uk) which contains a vast amount of information about the organisation.

We have communicated via Facebook throughout 2021, sharing garden photos, events from other organisations and activities round in the garden, also the public Pumpkin Day event.

We continue to use Mail Chimp to communicate with members and supporters, each maintained as separate lists. Members at times receive communications that are only relevant to them and they can vote at the AGM. The member group includes all plot-holders and active members who contribute in an active way to the garden's upkeep or development. Supporters are those who are keen to know what is going on and how to support us through our events.

Opening Times

We reinstated the regular (weather dependent) opening times on Wednesdays and Sundays 10 - 12 in the growing season March-November, which had been stopped during the pandemic.

Volunteers

The BWGA is still completely run by volunteers and we welcome new members from the local community. We continue to aim to use the varied skills of our volunteers. Some volunteers come for a short period of time and others make up the backbone of the BWGA garden volunteer team, particularly on the Wednesday and Sunday sessions. There was also a community Work Day in April.

The BWGA committee has continued efforts to recruit more support for administrative tasks. At the 2021 AGM, three new members joined the committee, who have taken on various roles during the remainder of 2021. This has been incredibly helpful as longer standing committee members had to take steps back for personal reasons.

Community groups, collaborations and partnerships

There are areas for educational purposes at no cost, which the BWGA offers as a commitment to encouraging the appreciation and benefits of working in the garden.

Spaces were still allocated throughout 2021 to Christchurch Primary School, Home education group, Recovery College (and NHS mental health recovery project) and a group of art students from East Sussex College.

In spring, BWGA also started a partnership with Groundwork South/Greener Futures project, whereby Groundwork runs weekly gardening for health sessions on a larger plot within the garden.

BWGA was proud to play a major role in the publication of local permaculture gardener and educator Anna Locke's book "The Forager's Garden" - the garden is featured as a case study in the book, and a committee member represented BWGA at the book launch to talk about their experience of creating such a space at Bohemia Walled Garden.

Plots

All plots have been in use throughout the year and any vacant plots have quickly been taken up by the next person on the waiting list. The pandemic seems to have continued to encourage more people to look into outdoor activity. For plotholders who had for various reasons issues with maintaining their plots, the committee was able to arrange support in those cases.

Plot fees have been raised from £1.20 to £1.50 per square metre, in light of the lack of income in previous year due to the pandemic.

Education

Many educational resources can be downloaded from the website, and we shared a lot of educational events that were happening in the community. One forage garden workshop was held in the garden, and Greener Futures led regular weekly volunteering and learning sessions.

Garden Management and Development

Members continued to maintain the borders, to give pleasure to members and visitors and also to benefit pollinating insects.

The grass area in front of the new wall, the top terrace chamomile lawn and the forage garden area was also maintained. Volunteers also improved the water collection and maintained the communal pumpkin area.

We had plans to build a sun and rain shelter for the plotholders, members and wider community and started making enquiries and collecting quotes. Due to capacity issues in the committee and the more pressing issue of water supply to the garden, these plans were paused for the time being.

Bringing piped water to the garden: At the 2021 AGM, members suggested engaging with Southern Water about connecting the garden to water mains. While we do want to use collected water where possible, the past few years have shown that for the garden to function as a garden, piped water back up is necessary. Hence, at the end of the year, one of the new committee members took on this task and made first contacts with Southern Water to explore possibilities of getting piped water into the garden

BWGA Public events in 2021

In September, the garden participated in the Sanctuary Festival which is organised by Hastings Supports Refugees in collaboration with Hastings Museum. Volunteers took small groups of visitors from the festival site on tours through the garden. This was very well received.

On 30 October, the garden hosted the much loved Pumpkin Day for the first time since the pandemic, and it was well received and attended by 114 people. Pumpkins had been kindly donated by the local Morrisons supermarket to top up those grown at the garden.

BWGA Members events in 2021

In July, there was a bring-your-own picnic by the plots for plotholders and members.

Conclusion

The BWGA works for the benefit of as many people in our community as possible so they can enjoy the environment of this lovely garden and area. We ensure that the walled garden is conserved, protected and improved for future generations to enjoy.

While things generally opened up in 2021, the consequences of the pandemic and lockdowns could still be felt. During the year, the garden slowly recovered with more activities. The partnership with Greener Futures has been especially fruitful to offer regular access to the garden to members of the community.

The BWGA trustees would like to thank all BWGA members, volunteers and partners for their support in 2021. We thank HBC for their continued cooperation in this joint effort. We also acknowledge and cannot stress enough that to realise the potential of the garden and to take over tasks from existing committee members who are needing to step back, it will need more support, particularly with the administrative and fundraising activities. Having gained three new committee members in September 2021 is a good start.

This report and the action plan show how the BWGA continues to meet the Charity Objects.

This report has been compiled and approved by the following trustees in post during 2021.

Sue Jirbandey	_____	/ /2022
Justine Munro	_____	/ /2022
Daniela Othieno	_____	/ /2022
Nigel Sinden	_____	/ /2022